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THE GIFT OF

SAMUEL ABBOTT GREEN, M.D.,

OF BOSTON.

(Class of 1851.)

19 March, 1890.

A Plea for Progress.

Cover

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Hiram Howard.

A PLEA FOR PROGRESS

ENFORCED AND ILLUSTRATED

BY A

SHORT DISSERTATION ON THE HABITS
AND CHARACTERISTICS

OF THE

RHODE ISLAND CLAM

BY

HIRAM HOWARD

PROVIDENCE

R. I. PRINTING COMPANY

1890

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19 March 1890

Gift of

Dr. S. A. Green.

TO MY FELLOW-CITIZENS,
IRRESPECTIVE OF PARTY, WHO ARE IN FAVOR OF
PROGRESS AND REFORM,
THIS PAMPHLET IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

PROVIDENCE, FEB. 7, 1890.

H. H.

CONTENTS.

I. INTRODUCTORY	7
II. THE SEWERAGE PROBLEM	10
III. RAILROAD TERMINAL FACILITIES	11
IV. PROVIDENCE AND SPRINGFIELD R. R.	14
V. BOULEVARDS AND STREET IMPROVEMENTS	16
1. WIDENING OF GREENWICH STREET	16
2. WESTERN OR PAWTUXET BOULEVARD	17
3. NARRAGANSETT PARK-WAY	19
4. THE MONSTROSITY ON DORRANCE STREET	19
5. THE OLD MUNICIPAL BUILDING	21
6. EASTERN BOULEVARD	22
7. BUTLER AVENUE	25
8. NORTH SIDE STREETS	25
VI. A SYSTEM OF PUBLIC PARKS	26
1. OUR PRESENT SITUATION	27
2. TOCKWOTTON PARK	29
3. BLACKSTONE PARK	30
4. THE DAVIS ESTATE	32
VII. PUBLIC BUILDINGS	32
1. THE STATE HOUSE	33
2. CENTRAL MARKET	34
VIII. A NEGLECTED OPPORTUNITY	36
IX. COMPARISONS, MORE OR LESS ODIOS	38
X. PRIVATE ENTERPRISE VS. PUBLIC INERTIA	40
XI. PROGRESS OR DETERIORATION	42
XII. PUBLIC SPIRIT IN PROVIDENCE	43
XIII. WAYS AND MEANS	47
XIV. CONCLUSION	48
XV. RECAPITULATION	51

APPENDIX.

A. CONCERNING THE CLAM	52
B. OLD STATE PRISON SITE,	60

A PLEA FOR PROGRESS.

OUR goodly City of Providence is possessed of natural advantages second to those of no other city in the United States. Picturesquely located at the head of our most beautiful inland bay, with sufficient diversification of hill and valley to give a pleasing variety to the landscape, circumstanced most favorably as to water supply and opportunities for good drainage, situated in the midst of a large variety of important manufacturing interests with the accompanying tendencies to the production of a teeming population and constantly augmenting wealth, Providence should be advancing in material prosperity more rapidly than most of her urban rivals and neighbors. Land values should be increasing; the *pro rata* wealth of the inhabitants should be steadily growing, and our city should at least maintain her relative position in these respects, as compared with other cities in our country, similarly or less favorably circumstanced.

What are the actual facts of the case? Every intelligent citizen knows that Providence is falling behind in the competitive contest for wealth and population — the two factors which make up a city's prosperity. Unless one has given special attention to the statistics, he can hardly realize the actual condition of affairs. Our citizens are not wanting in civic pride and patriotic feeling, but it is too frequently of the self-complaisant sort manifested by a young lady from a neighboring city, in the midst of the wonders and beauties of the Paris exposition, who "did hope she would get back to Ta'nton in time for the cattle show!"

It is no part of a genuine public spirit to be blind to the defects of the community in which one lives, or to superior excellencies in other communities, due to a wiser and more far-sighted municipal policy. A true civic patriotism demands that we should recognize a good thing wherever we see it, and wisely apply suggestions obtained from abroad to the development of our own abundant resources.

There are three very important factors that, more than anything else, are calculated to increase the population and wealth of a city.

First and foremost I place the element of *health*, for without that blessing we have nothing. The chief factors, subject to human control that make a city healthy, are pure water, clean streets, and a good sewerage system. Of pure water we now have an abundant supply, though we were slow enough in getting it. Our streets, as far as I am able to judge, are kept reasonably clean. We certainly have an obvious advantage over some other cities in this respect. Hence, the only thing needed, in my judgment, to make Providence the healthiest city in this country, is to complete our sewerage system. Of this I shall have something to say later on.

The second important element in a city's prosperity is *utility*; and I mean to comprehend in this term all the necessary conveniences for the rapid transaction of a large and increasing business.

The third element of importance is that of *beauty*; and the relation of this element to health and utility is much closer and more vital than superficial thinkers are willing to admit. It is a matter of regret that so little attention should have been paid to this factor which contributes so largely to the growth and wealth of a city. It seems to have been forgotten by a large number of the citizens of Providence, that beauty and comfort are elements of prosperity; that if

a city is to become and continue prosperous, it must be made attractive as a place of residence, not only to the rich and well-to-do citizens who can afford lavish expenditures on their own private grounds and houses, but also to the middle classes and the wage-workers.

We should, therefore, in my opinion, not only offer the most liberal inducements to capital seeking investment within our borders, but we should also seek to beautify our city and render it attractive, so that the owners of capital invested here will be glad to make their homes in Providence, and thereby add to the value of our taxable property. It surely should not be said that in a place possessing the natural beauties with which our city is endowed, beauty and comfort are always and everywhere sacrificed to a parsimonious policy, which in the end is necessarily found to be an unwise and mistaken economy.

In considering these broad questions of civic policy, neither party politics nor a narrow sectionalism should be allowed any weight in influencing our judgment and action. The public improvements herein advocated, are not urged or recommended for the purpose of gratifying the ambition or selfish interests of any individual or political party. They are advocated on the broad ground of the public advantage, because they are believed to be for the comfort and welfare of every citizen, and for the benefit of the community as a whole. Though having neither aspiration nor ambition for political honors, from a sense of duty to that section of my fellow-citizens with whom I agree politically, and a hope that if elected I might contribute in some degree to the prosperity of our city, I recently became a candidate for municipal office. In speaking as I now do — thanks to the fates! — from the standpoint of a private citizen, without partisan bias or obligations, and with a sole view to the advancement of the public welfare, I feel that I may confidently appeal to the people of Providence of all parties and

of no party, if such there be, with the hope that the views of public policy herein advocated may meet with a fair, candid, unbiased and respectful consideration.

THE SEWERAGE PROBLEM.

First, let us speak frankly of one or two questions of general interest to the people of the whole city. The most important among these, perhaps, is the problem as to the proper disposal of our sewage. This question has been discussed *ad nauseam* in our daily papers and before our City Council, mainly in defense of or opposition to some particular plan for securing the desired end. To me, the particular scheme seems vastly less important than that the needful work should be done promptly and economically, with due regard to both the present and future needs of our city.

I have not studied the subject sufficiently to enable me to express an opinion as to the merits of the different plans that have been proposed for the disposal of the City's sewage. I may, however, venture to say that I fully coincide with the views expressed by the Mayor of the city in his second Inaugural Message, viz. :—that, if a plan for the disposal of the sewage can be devised that will answer the requirements of the city without jeopardizing its sanitary condition, and at the same time cost the people less money than the scheme so strongly advocated by the City Engineer, then I am decidedly in favor of the more economical solution of this vexed question; that is to say, I am in favor of the cheaper plan, provided in the opinion of *disinterested* experts in such matters, the cheaper plan will fulfill the city's needs for several years to come. The filling of the Cove Basin and growth of the city seem to render it imperative that intercepting sewers should be built to carry off all sewage now entering the Cove Basin or the

rivers above Fox Point, to some outlet below Field's Point. Let this be done in an expeditious and economical manner.

As his Honor the Mayor intimates in the Message referred to, however, it will be time to build extensive precipitation works and tanks when it shall have been demonstrated by *practical experience* instead of *theory*, that the defilement of the waters of our harbor is of such a serious character as to demand that our city sewage shall be treated by a more expensive process. The salt water is nature's great purifying agency, and it would seem that we might safely trust this chemistry of nature until the products of our sewage shall have been demonstrated to be of sufficient value as fertilizers to justify private enterprise and capital in undertaking their extraction.

My objection to the plans calling for the expenditure of a much larger amount of money is not based upon the theory that the City of Providence *cannot afford* to adopt the more expensive method; but if, as has been stated, the cheaper plan proposed is sufficient to insure the health and convenience of our citizens, then I am in favor of economizing in this direction, and investing the money so saved in other public improvements which are nearly, if not quite, as essential to the growth and welfare of our city and the comfort and happiness of its citizens.

If I may be permitted to use a homely phrase, I would say that in my opinion it would be unsound business as well as municipal policy to "put all our eggs into one basket," when so many other baskets equally deserving our consideration are standing empty.

RAILROAD TERMINAL FACILITIES.

Under the head of "Utility," as one of the chief elements in a city's prosperity, I have ranked all necessary conveniences for the transaction of business. The chief

obstruction to this end by which our merchants and manufacturers are harassed and hampered, arises from the want of adequate railroad terminal facilities.

If I am correctly informed, this subject was first broached in 1870 — nearly twenty years ago — and during that time the question has been discussed to such an extent in our City Council and in the newspapers that its mention has become revolting to a great many of our citizens. Since 1870, children have grown to manhood and womanhood, young men and maidens have nearly reached middle life, and the middle aged have grown old; but “Terminal Facilities” have not come.

A plan satisfactory to the railroads as well as to the city has at last been decided upon, however, and we are told that in the near future, “Terminal Facilities” will have become an accomplished fact.

A few days ago, I asked a prominent railroad official to give me his opinion as to the time it would probably take to complete this work, and he replied that it ought to be finished within four years. Everything considered, I fancy that the citizens of Providence will feel profoundly grateful if this greatly needed and long deferred work is completed within the present century. If *we* do not live to see it, let us hope that our children may.

As compared with the dilatoriness of our own citizens and civic authorities in this matter, let us consider the facts in regard to the action of our sister city of Hartford, under similar circumstances.

In a recent conversation with Mr. C. H. Bunce, the city engineer of Hartford, I obtained the following information: More or less indefinite agitation of the question of improved terminal facilities in Hartford, first took definite shape in a public meeting in 1880. The interest in the matter subsequently died down, and was not revived until 1884. Several different plans were then proposed, and

one was submitted to the Legislature ; this plan, however, was not wholly satisfactory either to the citizens or to the railroads.

A commission, with large powers, was finally appointed, consisting of three commissioners, one representative of the railroad interests, and one of the city, which, after proposing one or two plans open to sundry objections, finally adopted a plan satisfactory both to the roads and to the citizens, and promptly carried it into execution. This plan involved the raising of the railroads, so as to permit Asylum Street — one of the main thoroughfares of the city — to pass under them ; the construction of a bridge ninety feet wide between abutments, to allow for five railroad tracks ; and the building of a new central railroad station.

The total cost of the entire work, in round numbers, was \$500,000, divided as follows :

Cost of altering grade of tracks, the expense of which was borne by the railroads and the city in equal proportions, \$300,000.

Cost of the new Railroad Station, the entire expense of which was borne by the N. Y., N. H., & H. R. R. Co., \$200,000.

It will thus be seen that the alterations and improvements cost the city \$150,000, and the railroads \$350,000. While the plan finally adopted differed materially from that originally suggested by Mr. Bunce, the City Engineer, he affirms that the money was well expended, and resulted in a substantial advantage to the business interests of the citizens of Hartford and to the general convenience of all the parties concerned.

The whole work was completed, so that trains were running over the new grade, in April, 1889 — five years after the revival of the subject in 1884.

The new Railroad Station is of Connecticut freestone.

and is architectually a very handsome structure, adorning and beautifying the city.*

In the City of Springfield, Mass., a new Railroad Station and terminal facilities are now in process of construction, the entire expense thereof being borne by the Boston and Albany R. R., while the city is responsible only for the land damages involved. The new Depot is situated one or two blocks east of the old structure, and consists of two separate buildings, one on the south and the other on the north side of the track.

The building on the south side is nearest the central or business quarter of the city, and is the larger and handsomer of the two; but both buildings are constructed of hewn freestone, and are ornaments to that portion of the city. These structures are already completed. The work of raising the grade of the tracks is now in operation, and will be completed during this coming Spring. The railroad tracks are to be carried over the street, so that there will be no grade crossing at that point after the work now in process of construction is finished.

The rule of action in these sister cities seems to be, when a public improvement needs to be made, *make it* without unnecessary delay. This is in sharp and favorable contrast with the custom in Providence, where the rule seems to be, when a public work is needed, *talk about it* twenty years and then *hope* that it may be accomplished some time within the next generation or two.

PROVIDENCE AND SPRINGFIELD R. R.

Some years ago, before the spire of Grace Church had perfected the present symmetrical proportions of that edifice,

* Those interested, may obtain a more complete history of the way in which these improvements were accomplished, by reading the remarks of Mr. C. H. Bunce, City Engineer of Hartford, pp. 18-22 of the proceedings of the Connecticut Association of Civil Engineers and Surveyors, Annual Meeting of 1886.

an enterprising retail advertiser on Westminster Street was accustomed to identify the location of his store as "*Opposite the Great Unfinished.*" This phrase aptly describes the status of many enterprises in our slow-moving community.

One of these, whose early completion is of great importance to our business interests, is the Providence and Springfield R. R. The object of this road, which would be attained by its completion to its original destination, — Springfield or Palmer on the Boston and Albany R. R., — was to give Providence a direct outlet to the west. Commenced in 1872, the section of the road then built, terminating at Pascoag, still remains the sole product of the enterprise, accommodating merely a local traffic within the borders of our own State.

When the road was built, in view of the additional facilities which it promised to afford to our business interests, the City of Providence was induced to guarantee the payment of its bonds to the amount of \$500,000. These bonds bear 7% interest, and are held mainly, by wealthy capitalists in New York. Maturing in 1892, the holders now have the assurance to ask our municipality to guarantee the payment of an additional quarter of a million, in compensation (?) for which they agree to complete the road to — Woonsocket!

Now, our progressive citizens are in favor of the early completion of this road according to the original intention. The Providence and Worcester R. R., already furnishes all necessary accommodation between our city and Woonsocket. It is my judgment that not a dollar should be guaranteed for this purpose; but I believe that our City Council can readily be induced to increase the city's obligations for another quarter of a million dollars, in case the road shall be completed from Pascoag to Springfield on the lines already surveyed. Since the bondholders have man-

ifested a willingness to do something toward the completion of this enterprise, let us "strike while the iron is hot," and secure a western outlet for our merchandise.

BOULEVARDS AND STREET IMPROVEMENTS.

The needs of the city in respect to public improvements are so numerous and so pressing that where to commence the enumeration is a perplexing question. For the sake of convenience, however, I will begin by mentioning two or three improvements in the thoroughfares on the west side of the city that should, in my judgment, be commenced in the very near future. First and foremost I will call attention to the

WIDENING OF GREENWICH STREET.

I wish to put myself on record as being heartily in favor of this project, not because I think that the improvements in this locality are more urgently needed than elsewhere, but because I am thoroughly convinced that a new departure from old-time methods and ways will be the dawn of a new era in the affairs of the city, and signalize the beginning of a series of public improvements sorely needed in other sections of the city.

It seems to me that our citizens should not regard the widening of Greenwich Street from a sectional standpoint entirely. They should take the broader view that this work does not benefit the Elmwood district alone, but that in a greater or less degree it would be beneficial to the city at large. A narrow sectionalism in the consideration of such questions, is fatal to civic prosperity.

The only objection to this work that I have heard is on account of the expense involved; but I maintain,—and I believe the results will justify the prediction,—that the

increase of real estate valuation in the neighborhood will be sufficient to refund the entire amount of the expenditure to the city within the space of five years.

In discussing the subject of this improvement, and of public improvements generally, one of our tax-payers remarked, "Oh! yes: I admit that Providence needs public works like parks, boulevards, etc., but the city cannot afford the expense."

In answer to this assertion, I would say that in my judgment the city of Providence *cannot afford to do without* these improvements; and that it can better afford to commence such work in 1890 than in 1900. I may be mistaken, but such is my earnest conviction. The special arguments for this improvement have been so ably and fairly presented by Mr. D. M. Thompson,* that I do not need to dwell upon them here. I advocate the improvement on the broad ground that an enlightened public policy recognizes that a measure which is really beneficial to one locality is for the advantage of the whole city.

WESTERN OR PAWTUXET BOULEVARD.

On examining a map of the southern portion of the city, I find platted thereon, in the district lying east of Eddy and Broad streets, three avenues designated as Allen's, Pawtuxet and Walton respectively.

The avenue first named commences at or near Eddy Street in the vicinity of Hill's Wharf, and running in a southerly direction, it closely skirts the river and bay for the greater portion of its length, finally ending at some point south of the city line.

The other two avenues referred to, begin at a point

* Exposition of the Proposed Improvement of Greenwich Street, etc., by D. M. Thompson.

farther south, and running in a southerly direction, nearly parallel with Allen's Avenue, likewise terminate at a point south of the city line.

At the time these avenues were projected it was understood, if I am correctly informed, that all three should ultimately be extended to Pawtuxet.

Recently, I spent considerable time in trying to locate these avenues, but did not succeed in finding any evidence of their existence within the city limits. After obtaining additional information, I made another attempt, and at last I found a short section of one of the lost avenues, in the town of Cranston, just south of Armington Street, which is the first street running eastward after passing the Cranston Hotel near the city line.

An avenue or boulevard should unquestionably be laid out in this section of the city. On reflection, I think it would be unwise to follow the exact lines of either of the three avenues mentioned. I would therefore recommend that a new avenue or boulevard be constructed, commencing at Hill's Wharf, and extending in a southerly direction along the edge of the bluff and overlooking the bay, to the city line. I believe that the town of Cranston would undertake the completion of the boulevard from that point to Pawtuxet.

Along its entire distance, this avenue would command a surpassingly lovely view of the river and bay, as well as the opposite shore; and when completed, it will make the most beautiful and fascinating drive in New England. It could be compared only with the celebrated "Jerusalem Road," south of Nantasket Beach; and it would have a great advantage over the latter in its urban proximity.

Its completion would open up magnificent sites for residences, and bring into the market real estate in South Providence now entirely overlooked by investors. It is my

firm belief that the increase in real estate valuations would repay the entire cost of the work within six years.

When I visited this locality a few days ago for the first time since my boyhood, the lovely view from the point I have mentioned was like a new revelation to me. If there are any who think the picture an exaggerated one, I hope they will make personal investigation, and judge of the beauties of this projected drive for themselves.

It would be better in many respects if the City of Providence could control the entire length, not only of this boulevard, but also of the other avenues extending to Pawtuxet; and I consider it unfortunate for the city that its southern limits do not extend to its natural boundary-line, the Pawtuxet River.

NARRAGANSETT PARK-WAY.

In further improvement of the southern portion of the city, an avenue or boulevard has been suggested, which should start from some point on Broad Street at or near the entrance to Roger Williams Park, and run in an easterly direction, intersecting the proposed Pawtuxet boulevard, and terminating at Field's Point. This boulevard should be 400 feet wide, with ample shade; and with the views of the river and bay which it would afford, it would constitute a magnificent park-way and drive, which would be of great advantage to this section of the city. In connection with the Pawtuxet boulevard, this proposed improvement seems to me worthy of favorable consideration.

THE MONSTROSITY ON DORRANCE STREET.

In further recommendation of highway improvements on the western side of the city, I shall now venture to call attention to the horrid blot and disfigurement in the shape

of an alleged building, which obscures our City Hall with one dire extremity, and with the other renders hideous our principal retail thoroughfare. It is scarcely necessary for me to say that I refer to the two-story wooden deformity, belonging, I believe to the Howard Estate.

If "a thing of beauty is a joy forever," then it must be conversely true that a creation of ugliness is an everlasting sorrow; and such I believe this frightful building to be to a majority of the citizens of Providence. To such of our people as are obliged to pass it daily at least, this structure is a perpetual eyesore and affront; and I do not believe any community other than this would endure such an infliction for a twelvemonth.

This building is a monument of private greed and niggardly public parsimony; and if it is possible to secure the necessary legislation for its condemnation, it should not be permitted to conceal the noble façade of our City Hall for another year. Why this strip of land, eight feet in width, was not condemned and acquired by the city at the time of the extension of Dorrance Street is beyond my comprehension. The removal of this building will permit the western boundary of Dorrance Street to be extended in a straight line from Westminster Street to the front of the City Hall.

The end of this singular structure that fronts on Westminster Street is, at the present time, gaudily decked with glaring red and white signs which have all the characteristics, except the lettering, of those that decorate the fronts of the "freak" museums on Chatham Street and the Bowery, in New York.

The Dorrance Hotel property now obscured by this deformity would be largely benefitted by its removal, and the owners of the hotel should therefore bear a fair proportion of the necessary expense of its condemnation and destruction. If our City Fathers, through their law officer,

will ask the General Assembly for such legislation as will speedily abate this nuisance, I feel sure that their fellow citizens will rise up and call them blessed.

THE OLD MUNICIPAL BUILDING.

Another unsightly object in the centre of our principal business thoroughfares, is the old City Building in Market Square. This building, unlike the Dorrance Street structure, had at one time an excuse for being; but the necessity for its existence has long since passed away, and why it is still allowed to encumber the ground is an unexplained mystery. This building has been a conspicuous nuisance for years, and it has become doubly so since the street adjoining it has been made the western terminus of the Cable Tramway.

The width of that portion of College Street lying south of this building is as follows, the space being measured from curb to curb :—

Width at South Main Street, .	48 feet, 9 inches.
Width half way between South Main and South Water Streets,	44 feet, 2 inches.
Width at South Water Street, .	41 feet, 4 inches.

As the tracks of the Cable Tramway Company now occupy nearly the entire width of College Street at this point, the place becomes actually dangerous to life and limb, and a constant menace to the safety of our citizens who in coming from or returning to their homes on the east side of the city, find it necessary or convenient to pass through College Street.

In my judgment, this building should no longer be permitted to disfigure Market Square. As it is said to belong to the city, no private interests would suffer on account of its removal.

I would, therefore, recommend that this structure be speedily demolished, and that the city erect upon its site the statue of Mayor Doyle, of blessed memory, removing it from its present less central and less advantageous position.

EASTERN BOULEVARD.

Such of my fellow citizens as do me the honor of reading this pamphlet, will discover that a boulevard extending from Washington Bridge to Pawtucket, along the shore of the beautiful Seekonk River, is a project I have very much at heart. I have faith to believe that at some day in the not far distant future this boulevard will have become an accomplished fact; and if, when it is laid out, it shall pass the spot made historic by the landing of the founder of our city, a more appropriate name than "Eastern Boulevard" may be suggested for this avenue. "Seekonk River" or "What Cheer" boulevard are neither of them objectionable; but after all, "What's in a name?" It is the *boulevard* that the people want, the nomenclature being of secondary importance.

With the exception of laying out and grading streets absolutely demanded by the necessities of travel, very little money has been expended in public improvements on the east side of the city; but now that the Cable Tramway has made this quarter of the city so easy of access, it seems to me that the time has arrived to give this matter serious consideration.

I firmly believe that the construction of one or more broad avenues or boulevards on the eastern side of the city will have the almost immediate effect of enhancing real estate values, not only in this locality, but ultimately, by attracting attention to Providence as a beautiful place in which to live, a public work of this nature cannot help proving a benefit to the whole city. So believing, I can-

not recommend too strongly the laying out of the boulevard under consideration.

This boulevard should commence at or near Washington Bridge, the first section extending from that point to Central Bridge by one of the two routes mentioned below :

First route.— Following the line of Gano Street, as laid down on the city map, to Pitman Street ; thence down Pitman Street to East River Street ; and thence to Waterman Street, near Central Bridge.

Second route.— Commencing at a point as near as practicable to Tockwotton Park,— say at the corner of Wickenden and Gano streets ; thence in a direct line to the junction of Pitman and East River streets ; and thence, following the line of the last named street, to Waterman Street at Central Bridge.

I consider the second route the better of the two. This would necessitate the filling in of the angle formed by the river between the two points mentioned ; but the value of the land reclaimed by filling in these flats would, in my judgment, more than counterbalance the cost of this work.

At the point near Central Bridge, the boulevard should pass under Waterman Street, and from thence it should follow the river's edge past the house of the Narragansett Boat Club and Blackstone Park, thence still following the shore of the river, and skirting the grounds of the Butler Asylum and Swan Point Cemetery on the east, to the city line at Riverside Cemetery. From this point I have reason to believe that the City of Pawtucket would undertake the completion of this boulevard, and eventually, I hope, extend it to its natural terminal point, the Providence and Pawtucket turnpike.

Although the view from this drive along the shore of the Seekonk is not so grand and comprehensive as that overlooking the bay from the western or Pawtuxet boulevard recommended in this paper, the scenery along the Seekonk

has the advantage of being more sylvan in its beauty, and is upon the whole, fully as attractive as that from the proposed boulevard between Providence and Pawtuxet.

With a reasonable expenditure of money, this Seekonk River boulevard can be made as lovely and attractive as that famous drive along the banks of the Wissahickon, in the vicinity of Philadelphia.

The possession of such a boulevard by our city would attract people to seek a residence within our borders, and thereby increase our population, which carries with it an improvement in the value of real estate. I believe that the advantages that would accrue to the city would be fully commensurate with the cost of this work.

If, after the completion of this river drive, another street or avenue could be constructed one or two hundred feet west of the top of the bluff overlooking the river, it is my opinion that the land embraced between these two avenues would be considered the most beautiful and attractive for residence purposes within the city limits.

As an example of the possibilities of the situation, let us suppose that dwellings should be built fronting westward on the avenue nearest the edge of the bluff; likewise, that the gardens in the rear of these dwellings should be terraced down to the boulevard below; is not the picture an attractive one?

When the improvements recommended in this paper shall have been completed, Providence can lay claim to be considered the most attractive place of residence in this country, as its natural advantages are unquestionably superior to those of any city in the United States.

It has been remarked of Providence, that it has only one attractive drive and that ends at a cemetery. If the dilatory methods that have prevailed in the past are to continue, it is safe to venture the prediction that before the public improvements so imperatively demanded shall have

become accomplished facts, the majority of the citizens of Providence will have taken this beautiful ride for the last time.

BUTLER AVENUE.

I consider the widening and extension of Butler Avenue second only in importance to the Greenwich Street improvement; and in my judgment this necessary and important work should no longer be delayed. I have received information from sources that I consider reliable, that the corporations of Butler Asylum and Swan Point Cemetery, as well as private citizens owning land abutting on Butler Avenue, have offered to donate to the city the land required for this improvement; and it seems to me that it would be suicidal policy on the part of our city authorities to neglect the opportunity thus offered to secure this right of way while it can be obtained gratis for the asking.

If real estate values in Providence have fallen so low that those charged with the management of our city affairs cannot see their way clear to accept the land offered for this necessary public work *as a free gift*, then our condition is truly deplorable. Let it not be said that this wealthy city is too timid or too parsimonious to accept the land that public spirited citizens stand ready to donate for public works of this character.

NORTH SIDE STREETS.

A few weeks ago, I drove out to the new reservoir at Fruit Hill, and was gratified to observe that Smith Street was being graded and macadamized to the city line. Improvements of that character at the north end of the city have been few and far between; and firmly believing that our city's valuation is increased by works of that kind, I

strongly recommend that the following streets receive the treatment bestowed upon Smith Street, to wit :

1st. *Smithfield Avenue*, from its junction with Branch Avenue to the city line.

2d. *Charles Street*, from its junction with Admiral Street to the city limits.

3d. *Douglas Avenue*, from Valley Street to the city line.

4th. *River Avenue*, from Valley Street to Admiral Street.

I venture the prediction that the regrading and macadamizing of these important avenues will return to the city in the increased valuation of taxable property, more than the cost of the improvement within the space of less than five years ; and I believe that a majority of our citizens would like to see the experiment tried.

A SYSTEM OF PUBLIC PARKS.

I desire to place myself on record as being strongly in favor of public improvements in the shape of parks ; but instead of a single large park situated at one extremity of the city, I should favor a chain or system of smaller parks in different sections of the city, for the reason that, in my opinion, these public breathing spaces and play-grounds should be easily accessible to all our citizens.

Public parks have rightly been termed the *lungs* of a city. While they are constructed and maintained for the recreation and enjoyment of rich and poor alike, it has always seemed to me that those who labor for their daily bread derive a greater advantage from them than their wealthier brethren, and for this reason, viz. : — the wealthy citizen, with plenty of means at his disposal can, if he choose, build his residence on the borders of the city in the centre of a three or five acre lot, and thus have practically a private park of his own for enjoyment and recrea-

tion ; but the laboring man, in a majority of instances, must establish his home in a crowded tenement house, and here he must rear his family deprived of fresh air, the sight of the green turf and foliage, and God's sunlight, unless a wise and beneficent City Government shall provide a system of public parks for the comfort, recreation and happiness of himself and family.

We are told that good and pious Roger Williams named this city in humble recognition of God's providence, which he believed had led him in safety through the wilderness to the fair shores of the beautiful river that skirts the eastern boundary of our city. Let us see to it that we perpetuate this providence to the poor and lowly who are with us, by keeping for their use and benefit some portion of this fair land which the founder of our city and his companions obtained by honest purchase from the Red men who were its original proprietors.

In earlier times, throughout England and the American Colonies, some portion of the land was always held in common in every city or village community, recognized as the rightful dower of the whole people,—rich and poor alike,—and easily accessible to all. Survivals of this custom may still be seen in the so-called “commons” of many of our older cities and villages. It is a custom worthy of perpetuation. The people may justly demand, not as a privilege, but as a natural and inalienable right, that some part of God's heritage, the land, shall thus be preserved to them.

OUR PRESENT SITUATION.

In Providence, we already have the beginnings of such a park system as I have suggested ; but a brief comparison will show that we are far behind most of our sister cities in this respect. Including the Cove Promenade, which

though central has never been an attractive pleasure ground, and which seems destined to be given up mainly to railroads and business purposes, we have in all about 123 acres of land allotted to park purposes,— some of it unimproved and inaccessible to the public. Relative to our population, this would assign nearly 1,100 persons to an acre.

Among our smaller cities, Detroit with a population a little larger than that of Providence, has a park reserve of about 740 acres, or a little more than 200 persons to an acre; New Haven has a park reserve of 384 acres, which is, relative to the population, about the same as Detroit; Worcester has 280 acres, allowing nearly 250 persons to an acre; Minneapolis, about the size of Providence, has 808 acres, or an average of 160 persons to an acre. Of the larger cities, Boston has a park allotment of about 2,000 acres; Philadelphia 3,000; New York, including the newly laid out parks in the annexed district, nearly 5,000; St. Louis, 2,232; Washington, 1,000; Brooklyn, about the same, and San Francisco nearly 1,200. These cities, with the single exception of Brooklyn, have from three to five times as much land devoted to park purposes, in proportion to the population, as Providence; and Brooklyn has nearly twice as much, including her magnificent Prospect Park. Is it not time that we should take some decisive steps forward in this matter?

In Roger Williams Park, indeed, we have 104 acres of land and lake well adapted to the purposes of a public pleasure ground: a park of great natural beauty, pleasantly diversified in scenery, and destined to become more and more popular as a resort as time goes on. It has, however, the practical disadvantage which it will retain for many years to come, of being situated on the outskirts of the city, remote from a majority of its population. I am convinced that before we spend more money for enlarg-

ing the area of this park, we should consider the needs and requirements of other localities.

In Hayward Park and Franklin Square, the western quarter of the city already has two small breathing places in addition to Roger Williams Park. The eastern and northern portions of the city are now in most pressing need of improvements of this character.

TOCKWOTTON PARK.

Our City Fathers did wisely when they decided to transform the grounds of the Old Reform School into a City Park; but I regret exceedingly that the city should have parted with any portion of this property, as the house which has been erected on the northwest corner of the park mentioned, detracts greatly from its beauty and symmetry. Immediate steps should be taken to secure the necessary legislation for the condemnation of this property.

In the first place, this lot should never have been sold; but having been sold, the city should have secured its condemnation for park purposes before its purchaser had erected a building upon it, and thereby have saved the taxpayers considerable expense. At the present stage of the matter, however, the expense should not be considered, but the building should be removed before our too patient citizens get used to enduring the sight of it. It is to be hoped that legislation for the condemnation of this property will be asked for at the earliest possible moment, as the longer the matter is allowed to rest, the more it will cost the city ultimately to have this property condemned.

NOTE.— Since the above was placed in type the State Legislature has been asked for the legislation above referred to, and the measure will probably be passed at the present session.

BLACKSTONE PARK.

I have before me a report of the Committee on Parks, of which Horatio Rogers, Esq., was chairman, which was presented to the City Council of the City of Providence on the 13th of October, 1873, and that portion of the report devoted to Blackstone Park I may be pardoned for quoting verbatim.

The language of the report is as follows :

“ BLACKSTONE PARK.

“ In the first ward there is but a single public park, viz. :
 “ Blackstone Park, which was presented to the city by
 “ Moses B. Jenkins, by deed dated Dec. 10, 1866, and
 “ was accepted by the City Council Jan. 14, 1867. This
 “ tract, containing about five acres, is a long strip of irreg-
 “ ular width, varying from sixty to two hundred feet, and
 “ extending from Butler Avenue to the Seekonk River,
 “ with a driveway of thirty feet in width leading to it from
 “ Hawthorne Avenue. It is a glen full of the most pictur-
 “ esque and romantic scenery, through the centre of which
 “ a brook of the clearest water winds its tortuous way. In
 “ natural beauty this little park is a gem. It is to be re-
 “ gretted, however, that its dimensions are so attenuated ;
 “ for its boundaries are so contracted, lying on steep hill-
 “ sides, that a great number of bridges would be required
 “ even to construct a road through it. Unless the city
 “ should add to its size, it is somewhat doubtful whether it
 “ can ever be used for carriages, and unless enlarged, it will
 “ at some future day be surrounded with houses, and its
 “ steep banks will be disfigured by the adjoining owners
 “ utilizing their estates. Nothing has ever been done to
 “ this park, and it lies in its primitive state. What, if any-
 “ thing, can be done to improve it must be the subject of
 “ future consideration, when the committee came to report
 “ upon the resolution instructing them ‘ to cause a plan to

“be prepared for the laying out and improving Blackstone “Park.”

This little park is fitly described by the committee referred to as a “gem,” but alas it still remains a rough diamond, for although this report was presented to the City Council more than sixteen years ago, no setting has been provided for this jewel; consequently it still remains in a state of nature.

In my judgment, it would be unwise to attempt the construction of a carriage drive through this park, for the reason that its dimensions are so limited and its grades so steep, that an improvement in this direction would not only be a costly process, but it would be likely to mar the beauty of this romantic glen beyond repair.

It appears to me, however, that there exists no valid reason why the city should not improve this charming bit of public property in other ways. For example: under the direction of a competent landscape gardener, grades could be made easy, and walks constructed for foot passengers, the little brook mentioned in the report of Mr. Rogers’ committee could be utilized so as to form beautiful waterfalls and cascades, and finally, in the marsh at the eastern end of the glen a little lake could be constructed in which water lilies and other aquatic plants would grow and thrive without the expense of cultivation. The glen traversing the length of this park is so moist the greater portion of the year that it is the natural home of plants of the fern family, and ferneries galore could be constructed at very little expense.

This bijou of a park is so small that the improvements herein suggested could be made at a comparatively trifling cost; and if our City Council is ever asked for an appropriation for its improvement, it is to be hoped that they will take into consideration the fact that there is no public park or pleasure ground in this quarter of the city. It is my own view that this work should be done, and be done at once.

THE DAVIS ESTATE.

I have already shown that little Blackstone Park is the nearest approach to a park on the east side of the city, but it can scarcely be called a public improvement, as the land was donated nearly a quarter of a century ago, and no work has been expended upon this property since it came into the possession of the city.

The North end is still worse off in this respect, as it is destitute of any public place of recreation whatever. I am, therefore, in favor of acquiring the Davis estate, and strongly recommend that steps be taken immediately for its purchase or condemnation for park purposes.

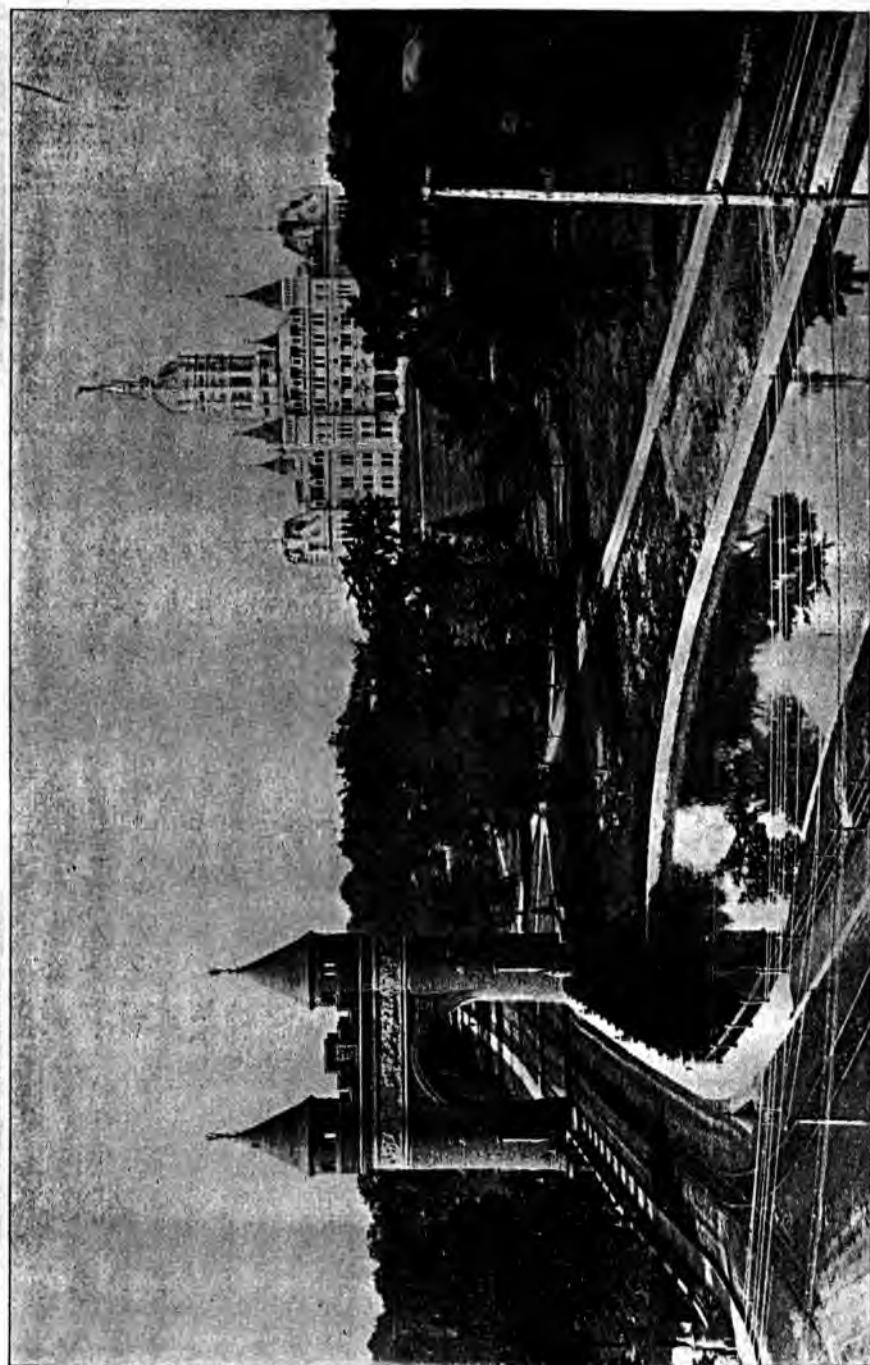
This estate is less than a mile, in a direct line, from the City Hall, and as I am informed that it can now be acquired by the city at a reasonable price, I hope that steps may be taken in that direction without delay, as the opportunity to acquire such an estate is not likely to occur again in the near future.

The Davis property has an area of thirty-five acres, and is already in a state of such high cultivation and improvement that little or no expenditure would be necessary to adapt it to the purposes of a public park, beyond the necessary purchase money.

As our city grows, other improvements of a similar character to those herein suggested will doubtless be required; but these appear to me to be demanded at once, and to be entirely practicable. Let us see to it that they are speedily accomplished.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

In respect to beauty and architectural effect in its public buildings, Providence is almost as far behind the times as it is in reference to other public improvements. We have a respectable Post Office and Custom House, though inad-



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STATE HOUSE, HARTFORD, CONN.

equate to the needs of a growing city ; a Court House that will compare favorably with similar edifices in other cities, as to comfort, convenience and utility ; and last, but not least, a fine City Hall, after a struggle of a quarter of a century over the question whether it should be located on the east or west side of the city. The primitive edifice on North Main Street which we dignify by the name of

STATE HOUSE,

whether we regard it from an æsthetic or a utilitarian stand-point, is not, however, a public building which our citizens can regard with honest and commendable pride, or even with reasonable feelings of contentment and satisfaction. His Excellency, the Governor, in his last annual message has so graphically illustrated its demerits in comparison with other State Capitols, that I can add nothing to the effectiveness of his statement. I content myself, therefore, with making a suggestion as to the most suitable location for the New State House, which it is to be hoped will soon adorn our city.

In connection with the improvements to be made in the vicinity of the Cove Promenade, it seems to me that no better situation can be found for our Capitol Building, than the north end of the lot on the rise of the hill back of the old State Prison,* fronting on the site of that edifice. This lot should be cleared and graded, with a handsome lawn running down to the street. Some part of the Cove Promenade in this vicinity may probably be saved for the purpose of a public park, and this, fronting the graded lawn, will furnish a fine foreground for the State House.

The State already owns this property, and if more land should be required for the purpose indicated, it can be acquired at a small additional expense.

* See Appendix B.

Some facts in regard to the erection of the New State House in Hartford are of interest in this connection. The land on which the Connecticut State House stands is the old site of Trinity College, and was purchased by the city of Hartford for park purposes at a cost of \$600,000. The city did not donate all of this property to the State, but permitted the State to erect a State House thereon, giving the State the building site and approaches to the Capitol, but reserving the remainder of the old Trinity College property for a City Park. In return for this gift the City of Hartford obtained the old State House, which it now uses for a City Hall. The action of Hartford in this matter has certainly been public spirited and liberal, as compared with the narrow policy which prevails in Providence.

With a new State House, located in a commanding situation back of the old State Prison site, a new Central Railroad Station, the completion of the Cove improvements and the removal of the Dorrance Street deformity, our Exchange Place will become a magnificent public square, of which we may be justly proud. The eye of the stranger entering our city will no longer be affronted by sand-banks, dredging machines, and a miscellaneous assortment of "ancient" but not "honorable" public and private edifices.

CENTRAL MARKET.

In a city of the size of Providence, a Central Market House is a necessity, and the want of a suitable building for such a purpose has long been felt in this community. Many suggestions have been made as to where the building should be located, but as no definite conclusion has been reached concerning it, the matter has been allowed to slumber.

A short time ago I consulted a prominent market-man in

relation to this subject, and in the course of the conversation that ensued, I asked him these questions :

1st. Are you in favor of or opposed to a central market system, and how is the subject regarded by retail dealers generally in your line of business?

2d. If in favor of such a plan, where, in your judgment, is the best place in the central part of the city to erect a building suitable for market purposes?

To the first question, he answered " I heartily endorse " the project and have been in favor of it for years ; and " so I believe are the majority of the dealers in my line."

To the second question he replied " As regards the location of a City Market Building, I believe that it should " be centrally situated and easy of access, and in my opinion the place of all others to erect such a structure would " be the open space between the Great Bridge and the " bridge that spans the river at Crawford Street."

As the gentleman with whom I conversed has been engaged in the business of selling meats and vegetables since his boyhood, I consider his opinion entitled to a great deal of weight. Accordingly, I caused the space he mentioned to be measured, with the following result :

Total length between the two			
bridges on the east side,	.	431	feet, 8 inches.
Total length of same on west side,	418	" 0 "	
Total width,	.	69	" 0 "
Total superficial area,	.	29,313	square feet.

It will be seen by reference to above figures that the space will admit of the erection of a building of sufficient size to meet the requirements of the city for many years to come.

If I am correctly informed, this open space is city property ; hence no outlay for land would be necessary, and

the city would only have to incur the expense of the erection of the building and the laying of the foundations upon which the structure will rest. If the city should decide to erect the building, I believe that the revenue derived from the rental of stalls would not only pay the interest upon the money invested, but in addition provide a sinking fund for the extinguishment of the indebtedness before we enter upon another century.

If the building should be made two or three stories in height, other sources of revenue for the city would be provided. For example: a portion, say one-half, of the second story could in all probability be leased to the Board of Trade, if the old City Building should be demolished, and the other half of the second story could be divided into commodious and well-lighted offices, which would be eagerly sought after by merchants and brokers doing business in that vicinity. If it should be deemed advisable to add a third story to the building, it could either be fitted up for offices, or left as an open hall which could be let for agricultural or horticultural fairs and exhibitions, or for any other purpose that would bring the city a revenue.

In the course of the conversation with my friend the marketman, I suggested that it was quite probable that the city might be unwilling to undertake the erection of such a building. In reply to this, my friend assured me that if the city would grant permission for the erection of the building and charge a reasonable rent for the space occupied, plenty of private capital could be obtained for the erection of a building, thus relieving the city from any responsibility or risk. Either as a public work or a private enterprise is not the experiment worth trying?

A NEGLECTED OPPORTUNITY.

Directly after the great fire in Lynn, it would have been eminently proper for the Mayor of the City of Provi-

dence to have convened the City Council and to have recommended the appointment of a committee composed of members of our city government to proceed to Lynn, seek an interview with the firms that had been burned out, and invite them to remove to Providence. A liberal and friendly spirit shown in this crisis might have resulted in establishing a new industry here, brought capital to our city, and also a large number of operatives, adding at once to our population and wealth, and bringing into use considerable idle and unimproved real estate.

It is scarcely necessary to say that no movement whatever in the direction mentioned was made by our city authorities, and the sequel to this policy of inaction is alike disheartening and disgusting to the friends of progress and reform.

One of the firms burned out in Lynn came to Providence *uninvited*, with the intention of locating here if they could obtain any encouragement. The persons representing this firm made no secret of the cause of their visit, or in regard to what they intended to do if they could find a site for their proposed factory at a reasonable price. After looking around for some time they found a tract of real estate suited to their purpose; but when the owners or agents of the property in question were asked to quote figures upon it, it was found that the price had advanced 100 % higher than the property had been offered at, only a short time before the manufacturers from Lynn came among us, prospecting for a business location. The grasping greed and pinching parsimony of the persons owning this real estate drove these gentlemen back to Lynn, and a similar opportunity is not likely to occur again within the limits of the present century.

Let me show you a most striking contrast. Shortly after the Lynn fire, I had occasion to pass through Vermont, and to while away the time on the train, I purchased

a number of local papers, and among them was one published in the little city of Burlington. On perusing this paper I learned that directly after the fire in Lynn the mayor of Burlington convened the City Council, and a committee was appointed consisting of the mayor and two aldermen, to proceed to Lynn for the purpose of trying to induce some of the burned out firms to establish their factories in Burlington.

Comparing the advantages of Providence and Burlington as manufacturing centres, it seems to me that the ratio should be at least ten to one in favor of Providence, for two reasons, viz. :

1st—The closer proximity of Providence to the markets of New York and Boston.

2d—The cheap water-transportation between Providence and New York gives Providence a great advantage over Burlington in the matter of freight charges.

Where Burlington could induce one manufacturer to settle in that city, Providence, therefore, ought to attract ten, if it should make a systematic effort in that direction. Whether or not Burlington was successful in its effort, the prompt action of its city government indicates the possession of a public spirit and enterprise that is unfortunately lacking in Providence.

COMPARISONS MORE OR LESS ODIUS.

I have already noted the greater liberality with which nearly all the leading cities of our country have treated the subject of public parks, as compared with the grudging and niggardly policy of Providence. In considering further the causes of want of prosperity in Providence, a few other comparisons may be interesting and instructive.

Take, for example, the City of Cleveland, Ohio. By the census of 1850, the population of Cleveland was 17,034,

while that of Providence was 41,513. Ten years later, in 1860, Cleveland was still behind Providence, the population of the former being 43,117, while that of the latter was 50,666. About the year 1862, it is probable that the two cities had a population nearly equal,—approximating 55,000 each. In 1870, in spite of the depressing effect of the war on population, Cleveland had taken a long stride ahead, registering a population of 92,829, against 68,904, for Providence. During the next decade Providence gained largely by annexation ; but in spite of this, Cleveland increased her lead,—160,146, to 104,857 for Providence. At the present time, the population of Cleveland is closely estimated at 260,000, just about double that of our own city.

Cleveland is a city of fine, wide, beautiful streets, and handsome public and private edifices. During the past decade, a large park, partly donated to the city and partly purchased, has been improved at the public expense.

With fewer natural resources than Providence, and certainly no greater importance as a business centre, in twenty-eight years Cleveland has advanced from a position of equality in population and inferiority in wealth, to one of superiority in both these particulars, as two to one. An article in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, of July 14, 1889, gives the names of sixty-three millionaires,—one of them being rated as worth \$150,000,000 : and of as many more individuals approximating the million dollar standard, who are residents of that city. Cleveland is sought as a residence by wealthy people of refined taste and liberal public spirit, on account of its many attractive features.

Or, take, if you please, the case of a somewhat older city,—Buffalo. In the past ten years, Buffalo has increased in population, it is estimated, over one hundred thousand, and the valuation of its property has been augmented \$70,000,000 in the same time. It is a city of broad streets and fine residences, and has a park system of over

five hundred acres, with boulevards connecting the different sections of the city, and forming drives, extending altogether, more than ten miles. With fewer natural advantages than Providence, Buffalo, as well as Cleveland is becoming the choice of wealthy, public spirited citizens as a place of residence on account of the broad and liberal policy which has characterized its city government.

Making due allowance for our gain in wealth and population by annexation, even our sister cities of Worcester, New Haven and Hartford have shown a larger proportional increase in population than Providence, during each successive decade since 1850. Can it be doubted that this is mainly due to a wise liberality in expenditures for public improvements which has made these cities increasingly attractive and desirable as residences?

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE VS. PUBLIC INERTIA.

Let us take an example of another kind; a comparison of the methods pursued by the City of Providence with those of an enterprising business firm in our midst.

Less than twenty-four years ago, in 1866, a new and as it has turned out a very progressive and enterprising firm started business on our principal thoroughfare. Six years later, in 1872, this firm had an opportunity to extend its business largely; but in order to accomplish this result, it became necessary and desirable for them to acquire a valuable piece of real estate and to erect a building thereon. This involved an expenditure of, we will say, at least two hundred thousand dollars; and this meant to the firm in question, the shouldering of a very heavy indebtedness, as they could not possibly have accumulated surplus capital to such an amount in the short space of six years.

Had the business methods of this firm been of the ultra-conservative order, they would have said in substance,—

“ We need this real estate for the proper transaction of our business ; it is a desirable piece of property and the price is not unreasonable ; but as we have not the money in hand to pay for it, *we cannot afford to make the purchase*, and must therefore let the matter drop.”

Happily, however, for the members of this firm, as well as for the city of their adoption, they had progressive ideas, and instead of abandoning the project of purchasing the property, they concluded, after consulting with each other and with their business friends that they *could not afford not to make the purchase*. As one of the members of this firm said to the writer, “ We remembered the old adage ‘ Nothing venture nothing win,’ and decided to assume ‘ the responsibility and incur the indebtedness.’ ”

That their decision was guided by wisdom and business foresight is evidenced by the fact that during the past twenty years this concern has been compelled to make at different times six additions to their original purchase to meet the requirements of their large and rapidly increasing business. At the present time this concern disburses upwards of \$3,000 weekly to its employees, and the taxes paid to the city by the firm and the individual members thereof, amount to nearly \$8,000 per annum.

The point I wish to make is this : if the firm I have used as an illustration had conducted its business on the lines that have characterized the administration of our city affairs, it is safe to say that they would still be occupying the small shop in which they commenced business ; or what is more probable still, they would have failed and gone to the dogs years ago.

The moral to be drawn from this illustration points unerringly to this conclusion, viz. : that many of our citizens and our wide-awake business men are vastly more progressive and far seeing than the gentlemen who are pop-

ularly supposed to represent the people in the councils of our city.

PROGRESS OR DETERIORATION?

A further statement of cold facts, illustrating the depreciation in real estate values in Providence between 1857 and 1887, will "point the moral and adorn the tale" which I have herein endeavored to set before you :

In 1857 a citizen of Providence died, the bulk of his property at the time of his decease being invested in real estate, a portion of which consisted of a block or parcel of land containing about forty-eight thousand square feet, bounded by four streets, situated within less than five hundred feet of the City Hall, and about eight hundred feet from the western end of the Union Passenger Station on Exchange Place.

For several years previous to his decease, the owner of this property valued it at \$1.50 a square foot, and after his death it was appraised by competent persons to be worth that amount. One might naturally suppose that real estate situated close to the heart of the city would increase in value in thirty years, but I shall shortly demonstrate that instead of increasing, it actually depreciated in value during that period.

When a piece of real estate has not changed hands in several years, its value must largely be determined by comparison; and in fixing the value of the property under consideration, we must be guided by the price at which similar real estate in its immediate vicinity has been sold within a recent period.

A little more than two years ago, to wit, in 1887, a parcel of real estate situated in close proximity to the property I have referred to, and separated from it by the width of a street only, was sold to a capitalist in this city, for invest-

ment, at \$1.25 a square foot. A person who makes an investment in real estate naturally expects that the capital invested will yield him at least simple interest at the rate of 6 % per annum ; but when real estate situated within five hundred feet of the City Hall, actually depreciates in value during a period of thirty years, there is very little encouragement for a capitalist to invest money in real estate in the City of Providence.

The case I have mentioned is, by no means, an isolated one ; on the contrary, it can be multiplied by hundreds and perhaps by thousands, but the above example will suffice for the purpose of illustrating the downward tendency of real estate values in this city for the past thirty years. I do not believe that such a condition of things could possibly exist unless those charged with the management of our city affairs during that period, had, either through apathy or ignorance of the city's needs, grossly mismanaged the trusts confided to them.

PUBLIC SPIRIT IN PROVIDENCE.

Soon after the publication of the admirable pamphlet of Mr. D. M. Thompson, in relation to the proposed improvement of Greenwich Street, it was noticed editorially in the *Boston Herald*, in an article headed "Public Spirit in Providence."

I called the attention of one of our go-ahead and progressive citizens to the caption of the *Herald* editorial, and asked him what he thought of it. "Public Spirit in Providence!" he replied, "why this is the first time in my life that I have heard that Providence has ever been suspected of possessing any public spirit whatever."

The saddest part of this commentary is its absolute truthfulness. Assuming, then, that we deserve criticism for our want of public spirit, it is desirable to know the

cause of the apathy that exists, in order that we may apply the remedy.

The present position of Providence, so far behind her sister cities, is due solely to restricted suffrage, which has always to a greater or less extent prevailed in this city and state. Our laws in this respect are not only antiquated but illogical in the extreme; and to show their inconsistency it is necessary to give only a single illustration.

For example: Under our present laws, all our citizens, whether registry voters or taxpayers, can vote for members of Congress; but registry voters are debarred by a constitutional provision from casting their ballots for members of our City and Town Councils.

Where our City Council appropriates thousands of dollars, the Congress of the United States disburses millions, and it seems to me that if the *people* can be trusted to vote for members of the National Legislature, the choice of members of the City Council might likewise be safely confided to *all* our citizens. Admitting, however, for the sake of argument, that tax-payers alone should vote for members of the City Council, the question arises, who are the taxpayers?

When a person owns a residence or unimproved real estate from which he derives no revenue, it goes without saying that in such case the owner of the property pays the taxes; but when he improves his land by erecting thereon a dwelling or business block from which he derives an income, is it not equally clear that it is the tenant and not the owner who pays the taxes?

I will go farther still, and assert that every person who hires a room in a boarding-house, contributes his or her portion of the taxes upon the property, which taxes are always included in the rent of the building.

To sum the matter up briefly, *the final consumer pays the taxes every time*; this is the whole case in a nut-shell.

I consider restricted suffrage an enemy to progress, and in my opinion the provisions which discriminate against the "non-taxpayer" (so-called) should be speedily eliminated from the constitution of the State.

This assertion may be considered heresy in the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, but it is very good gospel in the states adjoining us, whose methods it would be to our advantage to study and endeavor to emulate.

As a matter of fact, our property qualification of \$134, required of the electors for members of town and city councils, is a relic of barbarism,—a survival, as a recent writer has shown,* of the old forty shilling freehold of the time of King Henry VI., of England. A provision of like character was embodied in the Charters of all or nearly all of our original colonies; but like an infant's swaddling-band, it was discarded by all except Rhode Island, when they arrived at the manhood of independent sovereignty.

To quote briefly from the aforesaid writer :

"The franchise belonged, by the (Massachusetts) Charter of 1691, to each freeholder who should 'have an estate of Freehold in Land within Our said Province or Territory to the value of Forty Shillings per Annum at the least.' In other words, the charter set up that old qualification of the forty-shilling freehold, which had been the uniform qualification for county voters in England ever since 1430, when the Councillors of the young King Henry VI., had so fixed it in order 'to shut out people of small substance and no value, whereof every of them pretended a voice equivalent, as to such Elections, with the most worthy Knights and Squires resident.'

"It is interesting to note, in passing, that one last sur-

* J. F. Jameson, Ph. D., in the *New England Magazine*, January, 1890.

“vival of this old mediæval regulation still lingers in
 “Rhode Island. The qualification of \$134, still necessary
 “in order to vote in certain municipal elections in that
 “State, is the last relic of a former general qualification,
 “which consisted of a freehold estate valued at \$134, or
 “renting for \$7 per annum.

“Now, since \$134 equalled forty pounds in old New
 “England currency, and \$7 was approximately equal to
 “forty shillings of the same, it is obvious that the old forty
 “shilling freehold qualification is not wholly extinct. The
 “Rhode Island citizens who can vote for City councilors
 “are the lineal representatives of those old mediæval
 “worthies ‘*qui expendere possunt quadraginta solidos per*
 “*annum.*’”

It appears that our property qualification is a survival of a provision which originated in England two generations before the discovery of America by Columbus; and that it was first adopted, *not to secure wisdom and economy in public expenditures*, but for the purpose of establishing a class distinction between “people of small substance and “no value,” and “the most worthy knights and squires “resident;” or, in plain English, *between the poor and the rich*. This, in my judgment, is the effect of this Constitutional provision at the present time. It helps to give our community the reputation,—not wholly deserved,—of being a close corporation of niggardly plutocrats, self-complaisant and unprogressive, which does not invite the residence and citizenship of the wide-awake, energetic and progressive men of affairs who are the life and hope of our American civilization.

Is it not time for us to substitute the methods of the twentieth century for those of the fifteenth?

WAYS AND MEANS.

I have made a great many recommendations in this pamphlet, which, if carried out, will involve the expenditure of a large amount of money, and the question will be asked, how is this money to be raised? I will answer this inquiry in two words, viz.: *Borrow it.*

If a person owns a valuable piece of unimproved real estate which is either clear of debt or only slightly encumbered, it is perfectly legitimate for him to borrow the money for the purpose of erecting buildings on his property in order that he may derive a revenue therefrom. This, as I understand it, is precisely the condition of the City of Providence to-day.

Mr. Thompson tells us that as regards wealth *per capita*, Providence is the fourth city in the United States, * and as the credit of our city is gilt-edged, it can borrow money on long time bonds at a very low rate of interest.

I find by reference to the second annual Message of his Honor the Mayor of the city, that the total city debt is within a fraction of eight millions of dollars. The highest rate of interest paid upon the funded debt of the city is 6 %, and the lowest $3\frac{1}{2}$ %, while other portions of the debt bear interest at the rate of $4\frac{1}{2}$ % and 5 % respectively, the average rate of interest on the entire loan, at a rough estimate, being about 5 %.

The City of New York, misgoverned though it may be in many respects, is now able to borrow all the money needed for its public works at the rate of $2\frac{1}{2}$ % per annum, and as Mr. Thompson has pointed out in his pamphlet, the City of Boston was able to float its bonds for money required for park improvements at the rate of 3 % per annum. I believe that the City of Providence could borrow money on long time bonds on equally favorable terms.

* In 1850, it was the second, being out-ranked only by little New Bedford.

To those who view with alarm any proposition to increase our city debt, I would say that under certain conditions, a city that owed fifteen millions of dollars might be more prosperous than it would be if it only owed half that amount.

Take the City of Providence as an example. If its present indebtedness should be increased seven millions, and the whole debt funded at the rate of 3 % per annum, the amount that the city would have to provide annually to meet its interest charges would be but a trifle, if any, more than it now has to pay on that account.

If the large sum of seven millions of dollars should be raised by this city, and wisely and economically expended in completing its sewerage system, railroad terminal facilities, and the construction of a comprehensive system of parks and boulevards, and if with these improvements our citizens can enjoy an absolutely free and unrestricted suffrage, I predict that inside of ten years Providence will contain a population of two hundred thousand people, and the increase in valuation of its real and personal property will reach at least sixty millions of dollars.

CONCLUSION.

My main object in writing this pamphlet has been to incite progressive and public-spirited citizens to renewed and concerted effort toward effecting certain reforms and improvements in the City of Providence. Many of the suggestions herein contained, however, are equally applicable to the entire State. Providence is Rhode Island even more emphatically than Paris is France. Some of the reforms which I have advocated cannot be effected without the coöperation of the State with the City Government, and some of the evils which I have deplored are not confined within the borders of our municipality. I address a

final word, therefore, to citizens of Rhode Island, irrespective of the particular localities in which they live; and especially to the members of our State Legislature.

In my opinion the most pressing needs of Rhode Island at the present time are the following :

1st. A thorough revision and amendment of our antiquated State Constitution; and not the least important of the changes demanded in this instrument is the abolishment of all restrictions in regard to the franchise, so that free and unrestricted suffrage may be conferred upon every citizen of our State.

2d. A reform of our electoral methods that will insure absolute purity of the ballot and put a stop to the infamous "boodle" methods that have so long disgraced our State and caused it to be held in contempt by all honest and right-minded people.

In discussing the question of the corruption of the ballot, not only in Rhode Island, but elsewhere in this country, the words of the illustrious Jefferson often recur to me :

"I tremble for my country when I remember that God "is just, and that His justice will not sleep forever."

The tree of Liberty, planted by the people and watered by their blood on many battlefields, cannot flourish, cannot even live, save in the soil of individual integrity and honorable citizenship. Boodler, "spare that tree!" Lay not your impious axe at its root. The purity of the ballot is the sole safe-guard of our Republican institutions. We cannot deny that our little State,—not wholly without reason,—has the reputation of being among the chief of the sinners in the purchase and sale of votes.

Unless we hold up to public scorn these corrupt practices, and render odious the political methods which have so long prevailed in our State, we are but a short step from anarchy, or what is still worse *plutocracy*, or the rule of wealth as against the people, *dollars* against *men*.

Unless these boodle methods are stamped out, I have a firm conviction that our country is fast relapsing into the condition described in the following lines :

“ Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where *wealth* accumulates and *men* decay.”

As far as legal remedies can avail, I am convinced that the Australian ballot, applied to municipal as well as to state elections, reinforced by stringent laws against bribery, with penalties for the taking as well as the giving of bribes, are our main reliance.

All such measures, however, must depend for their efficiency on the intelligence, high character and active interest in public affairs of the individual citizens. The public improvements herein advocated, and more than all, the spirit of good citizenship which will ensure their adoption, are, I believe, directly calculated to secure such a vital interest in the affairs of the commonwealth, as shall be its surest protection against the malign influences which threaten its destruction.

If in any small degree this appeal shall help to arouse such an intelligent public spirit among our citizens, I shall be abundantly repaid for counsels given under an imperative sense of public obligation.

RECAPITULATION.

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS RECOMMENDED IN THIS PAPER.

WEST SIDE:

WIDENING OF GREENWICH STREET.
CONSTRUCTION OF WESTERN OR PAWTUXET BOULE-
VARD.
NARRAGANSETT PARK-WAY.

CENTRAL PORTION OF THE CITY:

COMPLETION OF RAILROAD TERMINAL FACILITIES AND
COVE IMPROVEMENTS.
REMOVAL OF BUILDING IN DORRANCE STREET.
REMOVAL OF OLD CITY BUILDING.
CONSTRUCTION OF A CENTRAL MARKET BUILDING.

EAST SIDE:

TOCKWOTTEN PARK IMPROVEMENTS.
EASTERN OR SEEKONK BOULEVARD.
BLACKSTONE PARK IMPROVEMENTS.
WIDENING OF BUTLER AVENUE.

NORTH SIDE:

REGRADING AND MACADAMIZING THE FOLLOWING
STREETS:
SMITHFIELD AVENUE,
CHARLES STREET,
DOUGLAS AVENUE,
RIVER AVENUE.
ACQUISITION OF DAVIS ESTATE FOR PARK PURPOSES.

IN GENERAL:

ECONOMICAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE SEWERAGE
SYSTEM.
COMPLETION OF PROVIDENCE AND SPRINGFIELD RAIL-
ROAD.

APPENDIX A.

CONCERNING THE CLAM.

“ De profundis Clam-avi! ”

Upon several different occasions recently, I have noticed a “Banner with a strange device” floating in the breeze over the northern portion of our City Hall; and upon asking what it signified, I was told that it indicated that the Board of Aldermen were shortly to be in session.

The emblems upon this singular flag consisted, as nearly as I could make out, of:

- 1 Bee, more or less busy,
- 1 Sheep or Lamb, and
- 1 Goose.

Now the industry of the bee and the innocence of the lamb have become proverbial, and hence I suppose there can be no doubt about the signification of those emblems; but the use of the goose in heraldry being less common, the meaning of this symbol is more obscure.

In pondering over the subject I thought of the line in the old negro minstrel melody which, if my memory is correct, ran as follows: “Everything is lovely and the goose “hangs high”; and it occurred to me that upon the occasions when the banner bearing the emblem referred to was unfurled over the roof of the City Hall, it indicated that everything was proceeding in a lovely and harmonious manner in the Aldermanic chamber below. Wishing, however,

to be certain in regard to the matter, I asked a member of the late Board of Aldermen to enlighten me upon the point in question. My friend, the Alderman, had declined a re-election, and he seemed to be so glad to be relieved from the pressure of official duties, that I found him genial and communicative, and happy to furnish me any information in his power to impart.

The Alderman told me that certain persons, who if not absolutely evil-disposed, were, to say the least, ill-natured, had spread the report that the goose on the Aldermanic banner was emblematic of the geese in the chamber underneath; but he assured me that the statement was a base calumny and utterly without foundation in fact. Continuing, my friend the Alderman kindly explained to me the true meaning of the strange device. He said in substance, that the goose was the most watchful of fowls, and that it never indulged in sleep except in the most cursory and perfunctory manner; and when, overcome by fatigue, the goose at last succumbed to the influence of the drowsy god, it always slept with one eye open; hence the goose had been taken as a symbol of *watchfulness*.

I was quite relieved to hear this explanation of the matter, as certain of the ill-natured persons referred to by my friend the Alderman, had endeavored to persuade me that the goose emblem on the Aldermanic banner symbolized something less flattering to the higher branch of our City Council.

Methods and measures of the most antique character are held so sacred in this community that we seem to be living in the past, and hence it is unlikely that at any time in the near future there will be an alteration in the symbols and devices emblazoned upon our city flags; but if any change should be demanded, I have in mind a symbol that should be adopted by both branches of our City

Council, if the non-progressive methods that have prevailed for the past quarter of a century are to continue.

The thing that I shall venture to suggest is an inhabitant of the waters that lap the shores of our beautiful bay, and is held in high veneration in this city and throughout the State. It is scarcely necessary for me to say that I refer to the *Rhode Island Clam*.

I have recently been interested and amused in reading the advertisement of a wide awake and progressive merchant in a neighboring city. The advertisement in question treats upon the characteristics of the *Clam*, and these seem to me to be so typical of the methods that have obtained in our city that I may be pardoned for reproducing this advertisement in full :

DON'T BE A CLAM!

Some of us are Clams from force of habit.

Some of us are Clams from want of having our attention drawn to new things and new ideas.

Some of us prefer to be Clams.

From time immemorial it has been customary to describe different traits of character of men and women by such phrases as "innocent as a lamb," "cunning as a fox," "gentle as a dove," "stubborn as a mule," "cruel as a tiger," "faithful as a dog," "dirty as a pig," and so on.

Now some of these traits are good ones to copy after — some are to be avoided.

But the Clam ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! !

Clams are not noted for their intelligence — they are not enterprising — they open their shells to take in their accustomed food, but they shut up very tight when anything new comes along,

For they are Clams and are Set in their Ways.

and don't propose to allow anything to penetrate their shells that was unknown to their grandfather clams and their grandmother clams; they are not a proper model for even an ignorant person to copy after.

So Don't be a Clam,

but take an interest in new ideas and try new things.

An eminent writer says:

"The advancement of the world, and the spread of civilization and Christianity depends on interchange of thought among people, and their willingness to learn, and that the man or woman who opposes the introduction of new improvements, the trial of new ways and the use of new things, should be condemned as not being a good and useful member of society."

The above should be learned by heart by every boy and girl, and they should be taught from the very beginning that the more intelligent persons are, the more gladly they will hear of easier ways, and the more willingly they will try new things.

I recently had the pleasure of receiving a personal letter from the author of the foregoing advertisement, from which the following is an extract :

“ Philadelphia has the worst paved streets of any city
 “ I have ever been in, either in this country or Europe.
 “ \$2,000,000 spent every year would increase real estate val-
 “ uation enough to bring the whole amount of each year's
 “ expenditure back in four or five years. The *clam* (or
 “ conservative) element don't believe in that (or any other)
 “ theory. They consider every cent *spent* as *lost*. Such
 “ people cannot be converted by ridicule, invective or argu-
 “ ment; they should be *shelved*, but there are so many of
 “ them that it is almost like the mice wanting to put the
 “ bell on their enemy the cat, easy to decide as proper,—
 “ hard,—very hard to effect.

“ I think the trouble with Providence, Philadelphia, and
 “ similar old foggy places, is that there is not enough ‘ boom-
 “ ing’ of the places *through the newspapers*, which if done
 “ would draw new people, which is the same as an infu-
 “ sion of new blood.

“ Our 1876 ‘ Centennial ’ saved Philadelphia from *Dry*
 “ *Rot* by this process, drawing the attention of boys and
 “ girls, women and men who have since come among us,
 “ and that is probably what Providence needs. Adver-
 “ tise your advantages by some plan and get new blood
 “ from neighboring as well as far off places. (Much
 “ easier said than done, alas) ! ”

I submit that our city can get no better advertising than that which will be derived from the announcement in the newspapers, from time to time, that the public improvements herein advocated have been decided upon, and are in process of accomplishment.

After reading what this gentleman has written concern-
 ing *clams* and their ways, it is easy for me to understand

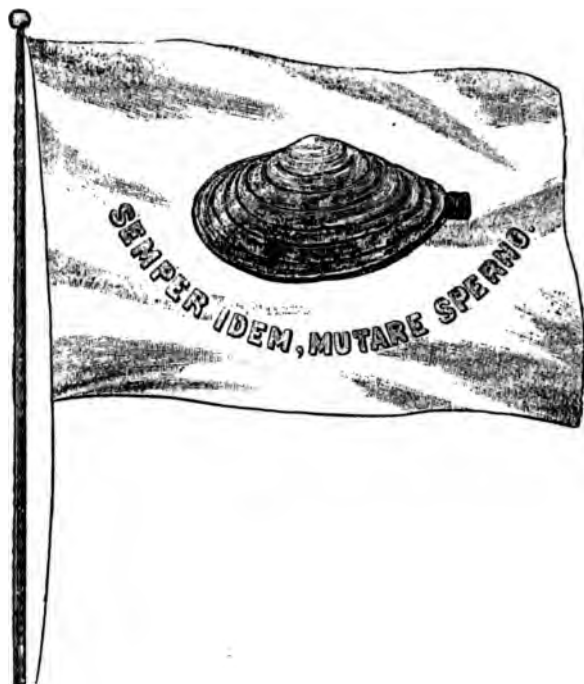
why this species of shell-fish is held in such great veneration in Rhode Island. It requires a lively imagination to believe the *clam* to be capable of an emotion, and yet the old saying "as happy as a *clam* at high water" has become proverbial in this State; but if the *clam* is capable of feeling a certain degree of happiness, it is not on account of duty well performed, not because he has made any progress, not because he has accomplished anything; oh! dear no; if the *clam* is happy it is simply because the incoming tide brings him a supply of food, and enables him to wax fat and succulent, and places him in a condition to tickle the palate of the epicure.

It is not in the nature of the *clam* to be *actively* happy, but he may be passively so, simply because he exists. The *clam* has no enterprise, he is absolutely non-progressive, he never "gets there," he probably never tries; and for these reasons, it seems to me that this venerated bivalve should be chosen as the most suitable emblem that could be adopted, to typify the policy that has so long held this goodly city in its deadly grip.

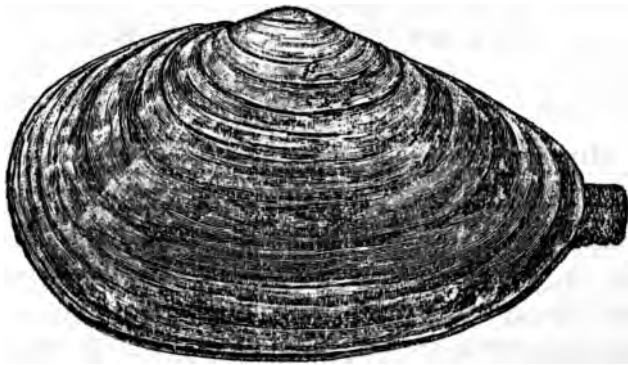
If the majority of our citizens prefer to lie supinely upon their backs while the policy of *dry rot* continues, if they wish to see real estate values depreciate, except in a few favored localities, year after year, let them abolish the old banners and the old symbols, and substitute a new flag bearing the emblem of ultra-conservatism, non-progress and inaction, the *Rhode Island Clam*, coupled with the following legend:

"Semper idem, mutare sperno."

We know that the clam is used to being *baked*, and if there are any types of this bivalve still remaining in our City Council, they must expect nothing better than a *roasting* at the hands of their progressive fellow citizens.



DE PROFUNDIS CLAM-AVI.



Self-satisfied, immovable,
I change my status never ;
'Though " men may come and men may go "
I still remain *in statu quo*
FOREVER.

APPENDIX B.

OLD STATE PRISON SITE.

PROVIDENCE, Feb. 19, 1890.

MR. HIRAM HOWARD:

Dear Sir: In compliance with your request for certain information concerning the old State Prison lot on Gaspee Street in this city, and adjacent property, I respectfully submit this report.

The facts stated were obtained from the city tax assessors' plat No. 4, and personal inspection of the premises.

The State Prison lot is numbered 213 on assessors' plat No. 4, and contains according to said plat, 192,728 square feet. It is bounded on the west by Park Street, on the south and southeast by Promenade and Gaspee streets, and on the northeast and east by private owners. It measures on Park Street 423.08 feet, on Promenade Street 374.78 feet, on Gaspee Street 311.23 feet, on its northeast side 375.32 feet, and on its north side 255.7 feet. Less than half the entire area is covered by the buildings, prison yard and front yard, the remainder being entirely unoccupied. The valuation of the buildings is placed by the city assessors at \$100,000, but as the property belongs to the State it is exempt from taxation. The land is valued by the assessors at 30 cents a square foot, making the entire

lot worth \$57,818, and the total valuation of land and buildings \$157,818. A portion of the prison yard and buildings is occupied by the Granger Foundry and Machine Company. Otherwise the buildings appear to be mostly unoccupied, though nailed to a pillar at the main entrance a metal sign, on which the word "Boarding" appears, indicates that some trivial income may be derived from letting the old pile of granite with its iron barred windows for a cheap boarding house where voluntary cash is presumably contributed for board and lodging, instead of involuntary labor, as under the old prison régime. The lot is an irregular hexagon in shape, one of its angles being a slight deflection in the line of Gaspee Street. None of the angles are right angles.

The land next northeast of the State Prison lot on Gaspee Street is owned by the William A. Harris Steam Engine Co. It is comprised in lots numbered 210, 211 and 212 on the assessors' plat. These lots contain respectively 7,094, 5,455 and 50,200 square feet. On the southwest side of this property lies the State Prison lot, on which it measures about 263 feet. On the southeast is Gaspee Street, on which it measures 143 $\frac{3}{4}$ feet. Northeast is Francis Street, on which it measures 309.28 feet. North is Lincoln Street, on which it measures 121.96 feet. West lies land taxed to Timothy Newell, on which it measures 189.56 feet. There are buildings of stone, brick and wood on this land, which are occupied by the Granger Foundry & Machine Co., for the manufacture of certain kinds of machinery. These buildings are valued by the assessors at \$15,000, but the assessors' book represents lots 210 and 211 of this tract as vacant, whereas parts of some of the buildings stand on those lots and may not be included in the above valuation. Lot No. 212, on the corner of Francis and Gaspee streets, is valued by the assessors at 30 cents a square foot, making the land value \$15,060. No. 211,

on the corner of Francis and Lincoln streets, is valued at 20 cents a square foot, amounting to \$1,091. No. 210, fronting on Lincoln Street, is valued at 18 cents a square foot, amounting to \$1,277. The total valuation of land in these lots belonging to the William A. Harris Steam Engine Co., and occupied by the Granger Foundry & Machine Co., is \$17,428, and of land and buildings together is \$32,428.

Lots numbered 204 to 209 inclusive on the assessors' plat, join the State Prison lot on the north, and extend from Park Street, on the west, along Lincoln Street, which lies north of them, to lot No. 210, belonging to the William A. Harris Steam Engine Co., on the east. They are house lots, most of them containing occupied dwelling houses, valued by the assessors at various sums ranging from \$2,800 to \$6,500 each.

The following table gives the ownership, area, valuation a square foot, total valuation of land, valuation of buildings, and total valuation of land and buildings for these lots, and also of the property previously described, as given on the city assessors' books :

Lot No.	OWNER.	Square Feet.	Value per ft.	Value of Land.	Value of Buildings.	Total Value.
204	James Annable.....	10,703	30 cts.	\$3,210	\$6,500	\$9,710
205	George T. Paine, trustee.	2,548	25 "	637	3,000	3,637
206	Mary Metcalf.....	5,309	20 "	1,062	200	1,262
	Mary T. Farnum, wife of					
207	Chas. W. (Glocester).....	5,689	20 "	1,137	2,800	3,937
208	Timothy Newell.....	6,640	20 "	1,328	5,000	6,328
209	"	7,702	18 "	1,386		1,386
210	Wm. A. Harris Steam Eng. Co	7,094	18 "	1,277		1,277
211	"	5,455	20 "	1,091		1,091
212	"	50,200	30 "	15,060	15,000	30,060
213	State of Rhode Island.....	192,728	30 "	57,818	100,000	157,818
	Total in block bounded by Gaspee, Promenade, Park, Lincoln and Francis Streets	294,068			\$132,500	\$216,506

It will be seen by reference to the above table that the entire block bounded by Gaspee, Promenade, Park, Lincoln and Francis Streets contains a superficial area of 294,068 square feet, of which the State of Rhode Island now owns nearly two-thirds, or 192,728 square feet. Also that the assessors' valuation of the entire tract, with buildings, is \$216,506, of which the State of Rhode Island owns nearly three-fourths, or \$157,818.

Accompanying this communication is a map of the entire block bounded by the above-mentioned streets, which is made a part of this report.

Respectfully submitted,

CHARLES F. JANES,

Civil Engineer.

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